

Spring Driving Tips

Now that you've survived driving in one of the most brutal winters in our nation's history, getting around in spring should be a breeze, right? Not exactly.

Spring presents its own unique challenges to motorists, experts say. For starters, there can be a "letting your guard down" mentality that sets in as the ice and snow have melted away, and pure giddiness over rising temperatures prompts a sense of abandonment. But there are special, seasonal challenges that drivers need to keep in mind.

With that, here are some tips:

- **Realize that a wet road can be just as slick as an icy one.** Tires will hydroplane and lose contact with the road, which is as dangerous as hitting pure ice. Also, rain causes oil dripped from passing vehicles to rise to the top of the water surface, increasing the slick factor. Stay in the middle lanes as water tends to pool in the outside ones, according to SmartMotorist, a nonprofit that seeks to promote safe driving.
- **Increase the distance between you and the vehicle you're following in the rain.** Three seconds is considered a safe distance in normal circumstances. During a storm, increase this to eight seconds. The three second rule is a simple way to double-check that you are driving at a safe following distance. Choose a fixed point (like a road sign or a building) that is even with the car in front of you. If you reach that same fixed point before you can count to three, then you're driving too close to the car in front of you and you need to fall back a bit.
- **Replace worn tires.** Worn treads will cause a loss of traction, increasing your chances of sliding. Also, even if the tread is fine, you need to make sure the tires are properly inflated. An easy way to check that your tire has an acceptable tread is to do the penny test. Simply put a penny into the groove of the tread. If you can see Lincoln's head, your tire needs repairing. Find out more about tire safety [here](#).
- **Check wiper blades.** A winter's worth of snow, ice and salt can beat down the wipers, so you may need to replace those, too. Also, clean your windshield with good window washer to improve wiper performance. This will also remove oily film that can reduce visibility, according to CarJunky.com, an automotive parts and maintenance site. You should also clean the inside of the glass to remove film that increases moisture buildup.
- **Be on the lookout.** Spring is also Pothole Season. In places that snow and ice have dominated the winter months, the spring thaw can cause dangerous potholes. Avoid them if you can, but if not, don't brake while traveling over them.

Slow down, release the brake before impact and go over the pothole. Braking causes your tire to slam into the edge of the pothole with more force than if you're rolling over the hole.

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